

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 474

By Haile

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Walter Thomas Durham,
State Historian of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Walter Thomas Durham, State Historian of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Walter T. Durham was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, a gentleman who possessed an unrivaled knowledge of the wonderful history of Tennessee, Walter Thomas Durham served with distinction as State Historian after being appointed by Governor Don Sundquist in 2002 and reappointed by Governor Phil Bredesen in January of 2011; and

WHEREAS, born on October 7, 1924, Walter Thomas Durham was the son of George Franklin and Celeste McAlister Durham, and was raised in the Gallatin community of Sumner County, attending public schools in Gallatin; and

WHEREAS, a member of our Nation's "Greatest Generation," Mr. Durham proudly served in the United States Army Air Force during World War II from 1943 to 1946, serving overseas in Africa and Italy; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Durham attended the University of Wisconsin and Vanderbilt University, earning both his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees from Vanderbilt, where he was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa and Pi Sigma Alpha honorary societies; and

WHEREAS, a highly successful businessman, Walter Durham was a partner in the Durham Building Supply Company in Gallatin from 1948 to 1973, the founder and president of Gallatin Aluminum Products Co., the Chairman of Wholesale Plumbing and Electric Supply Co., and the Chairman of First and Peoples National Bank in Gallatin from 1979 to 1986; and

WHEREAS, the award-winning author of twenty-four books concerning Tennessee history, Walter Thomas Durham possessed a passion for sharing the history of our beautiful state with his fellow citizens and increased awareness of Tennessee's extraordinary cultural heritage; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Durham was president of the Tennessee Historical Society from 1973 to 1975; founding president of Tennessee Heritage Alliance, now the Tennessee Preservation Trust; member of the board and past president of Friends of the Vanderbilt Library; former chair of the Tennessee Library Advisory Council; past president of the Sumner County Historical Society; former co-chair Tennessee Archives Summit; former chair of the Tennessee Historical Commission; and member of the Tennessee Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission and the War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission; and

WHEREAS, active in his community, where he was a former president of the Gallatin Chamber of Commerce and the Gallatin Lions Club, Mr. Durham worked tirelessly on behalf of Sumner County, which included industrial recruitment for the City of Gallatin between 1950 and 1960, as well as a tenure on the Tennessee State Industrial Development Commission from 1963 to 1972; and

WHEREAS, a champion for education, Walter Durham served as a member of the Monmouth College Senate and a trustee of Monmouth College; as a member of the President's Advisory Committee at Volunteer State Community College and the Vanderbilt Alumni Board of Directors; and past chair of the Steering Committee for The Heard Library Society at Vanderbilt University; and

WHEREAS, an active supporter of Tusculum College in Greeneville, Tennessee, Mr. Durham was conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters by Tusculum College in recognition of his historical scholarship and his exemplary service to the good people of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, during his lifetime, Walter Durham was no stranger to honors and accolades, receiving the Outstanding Member Award from the Architectural Aluminum Manufacturers Association, Employer of the Year from the Gallatin Jaycees, Jaycee

Distinguished Service Award, Volunteer State Community College Distinguished Public Service Award, the Glass Apple Award from Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, and the Sertoma Service to Mankind Award; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Durham also received the Tennessee History Book Award from the Tennessee Historical Commission and the Tennessee Library Association, the Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History, the John H. Thweatt Archival Advancement Award, and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Tennessee Preservation Trust; and

WHEREAS, Walter Durham was a faithful member of Gallatin United Methodist Church, where he served in many leadership roles in addition to service as chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Tennessee Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church from 1984 to 1992; and

WHEREAS, deeply devoted to his family, Mr. Durham enjoyed the loving companionship of his beloved wife of sixty-four years, Anna Armstrong Coile Durham; was the proud father of four children, Elizabeth Durham Lindsey (Stan), James Franklin Durham (Lynee), Robert Coile Durham, and Anna Durham Windrow; and was the adored grandfather of Allison Lynee Durham, Stanley Doak Lindsey, Samantha Lindsey Wotiz (Todd), and Robert (Bob) Leland Windrow (Dana); and

WHEREAS, Walter Thomas Durham leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, seldom do gentleman of this stature walk among us and it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and beloved son of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Walter Thomas Durham, State Historian of Tennessee, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Durham.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.